

Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held at 6pm on 31 January 2024, Teams

Present

Graeme Marchbank (GM)	Chair
Euan Lowe (EL)	Chief Executive
Andrew Dunlop (AD)	Board Director
David Beattie (DB)	Board Director
Jackie Davidson (JD)	Board Director
Andy Figgins (AF)	Board Director
Caitlin McClatchey (CM)	Board Director
Gillian Strathearn (GS)	Board Director
Kieran Watt (KW)	Board Director
Fiona Crawford (FC)	President
Derek McGown (DMC)	Vice President

In Attendance

Deborah McGinniss (DM)	Finance Manager/Company Secretary
Elaine Mackenzie (EM)	Director of Services
Helen Frost (HF)	Head of Marketing
Deborah Alexander (DA)	Minute Taker
Sean Dawson (SD)	Safeguarding Manager
Barry Cook (BC)	sportscotland partnership manager

Item No.

Action

1. Chair's Address

The thanked everyone for their flexibility and to all for co-operating with the date change at short notice. Also noted that 2 Board members will be leaving the Board this calendar year. In May there will also be the annual review of the Board members skills alignment against their role and EL will run a matrix review in this area against the new corporate plan, which will inform recruitment once DB and AF leave later in the year. **EL**

The Chair closed his address by welcoming GS to the Board and her first meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Apologies for Absence

None

4. Minutes of Previous meetings: Board Meeting, 15 November 2023

DMC highlighted that both himself and DM initial were the same, and it was agreed that DMC would be used for Derek McGown going forward.

The Chair highlighted that a potential risk (around the wording of section 8.4) has not been included within the minute.

Previous minutes to be amended to reflect that BC was not absent from meeting, joined late.

5. Actions from previous meeting: Board Meeting, 15 November 2023

Actions from last meeting:

- Update on PVG process – this has been supported and will be supported going forward. Representations from a number of SGBs to Harper Macleod and this has been submitted for response.
- British Swimming Company Representative. Suggested that GM will be the Company representative again and this is being actioned.
- Sponsorship policy – action complete
- PowerBi – action ongoing, KW and EL to meet on this in due course.
- Item 8.4 & 8.5 – both on agenda for this evening.

6. Marketing Plan & Save Our Pools Campaign

HP presented the marketing plan and thanked AD for his support and guidance.

The intention is to combine the 3-year strategy and the yearly into the same document, the objectives have not changed from last year, though there is yearly activity outlined, which will be deliverable by March 2025.

The theme for the year is 'Be Bold', which came out of team away day and was reached as a result of research carried

out in and out with the sector. This will sometimes mean going against the grain, for example, there is a lot of activity around woman and girls in sport within swimming, there is a shortage of boys and the plan is to be bold and focus on boys in sport to address the gender imbalance.

Looking to grow social media following by 7000 followers. A good job has been done by Charlie Harris to grow YouTube and TikTok opportunities and looking to grow LinkedIn this year too – there are a lot of good opportunities here. Website is continuing to grow and develop and it is improving in functionality. Work will be carried out on the navigation to find somewhere for the Active Communities piece to sit and this will be live by the beginning of the year.

The Save Our Pools plan is integral to whole marketing plan and it has therefore been included as an appendix. Had meetings with Marie Todd MSP and other ministers and looking to drive this work forward.

To keep profile high and visible, there is a content strategy in place, which breaks down activity into 'hero' activity (i.e. one-off events, Olympic/Paralympic activation), usual/regular activity (national events, podcasts, campaigns throughout the year) and then Save Our Pools activity and press releases, routine activity (social media posts daily, new round ups etc.) which helps maintain profile on a daily basis.

HP then spoke through the objectives for 2024/2025 which are set out in the plan. These are all linked to the wider corporate plan. She spoke through key areas such as 'It's Never too Late' and the 'Boys in swimming' & 'Save Our Pools' campaigns.

Looking this year to do a companywide survey to evaluate the perceptions of the membership in relation to mood, sentiment, loyalty etc, to ensure that communications remain effective.

HP sought feedback on the plan ahead of the launch in April.

The Board agreed that the plan was well structured and thanked HP and the team for their work on this. It was generally agreed that the plan is good, exciting and well structured.

KW asked what additional engagement/opportunities are available as a result of it being an Olympic year, HP confirmed that it gives more of opportunity for more engagement, and an uplift in website and social media activity – gives more content to post about.

AD queried the Save Our Pools campaign and how to build on existing momentum, particularly given the financial crisis – what outcomes can be reasonably expected. There was a discussion that whilst local authorities are the decision makers on pool operation, they are working within financial restraints which are controlled by central government. That being the case, there is a need to think carefully about how to engage with the Scottish Government and whether there should be greater cooperation with other SGBs.

JD sought further information about data gathering around the audience demographic, and HP noted that on Twitter and Facebook the audience is known and there is now a drive to increase the engagement from younger age groups on Instagram and TikTok. Looking to start to utilize Google Analytics to understand website traffic too.

DB highlighted that podcasts are a really good way to reach a wider audience, but wondered what the ideas were for the podcast's series. HP advised that the idea was to do a lot of different content across the organisation – i.e. one with an athlete and a coach, one on Learn2Swim with swim teachers, open water swimming in the summer etc. There is a plan for throughout the year for content.

CM asked if the YVP group were used to run ideas by and understand how to engage with the younger audience – HP advised that this is something that they wish to do more of, though some steps are already being taken in this regard – i.e. the YVP Instagram takeover.

The Chair commented on the Save Our Pools campaign and noted that the communication plan should be shared with Council to ensure the timescales and messages going out are known across the organisation.

HP

7. Wellbeing & Protection Update

SD spoke to the paper and confirmed there have been 10 cases active this year – 9 currently remain open and one case has gone from low level to high level due to the threat of potential for legal action. The Chair noted that if this comes through formally, the Board may need to be aware of this in due course.

The paper still refers to Hive as a method of providing support, but the changeover process is ongoing, to move to Brightspace. The website will change from a wellbeing design with the intention to add distinct pages for members and those for Club chairs. There is a lot of information which will be streamlined and hoping to have this completed by 1 April.

Now utilising the trans participation and competition policy and have the first case which we are actively supporting. This will be a good test of the policy and the internal processes.

On training for CWPS and PVG checking – SD explained that he has removed the graphs from the paper as have now reached the point of compliance levels being as good as they are likely to be considering the natural movement of volunteers. SD is happy to provide information if there is any significant change identified, but unlikely to see any substantial changes.

The PVG numbers are now back to pre-Covid numbers of regulated roles, if anything a little higher just to having more volunteers in the system, but now static.

On the WPO training, currently seeing the best compliance numbers across all districts in recent times which is really encouraging. Looking to work to a minimum of 85% compliance and have all areas meeting this.

In relation to the changes in the PVG processing, the best option for the organisation has been selected and this is set out in the paper. This will allow PVG's to be processed quicker and removing Volunteer Scotland in performing an intermediary function. This will also result in better communication with Clubs and will remove from Clubs direct control/responsibility in recruitment. For example, where there are no contents on a PVG certificate the Club would be a liberty to make their recruitment decision, but where there is a conviction, this will come to SD who will review with the team and make the decision as to whether this individual is suitable to be appointed and this will trump any decision reached by the Club.

The Chair queried whether there was set criteria which could be referred to in assessing convictions and making recruitment decisions, to relieve some of the reliance on SD's judgment alone. SD reassured the Board that less than 1% of the PVGs have convictions listed and SD carries out a risk assessment and the relevance of any recent convictions. If SD is unsure, he would speak to Children's 1st who would help decision making. The Chair noted that there may be a role for **sportscotland** to ensure consistency across sports, and some guidance may be useful. BC signposted to Children1st, as they are the experts in this area, rather than **sportscotland**.

FC noted that if only 1 PVG is required going forward, is there a mechanism in place to flag up if an individual changed role (i.e. from a referee to a coach). SD confirmed that there was an internal process and 1 PVG does not allow 1 coach to drop into multiple clubs in multiple roles without checking by the organisation. They will also need to be updated, with current guidance being a minimum of every 5 years – though the recommendation being suggested today is that this is shortened to 3 years and SD sought the Board's opinion on this.

The Board were content with this approach.

EL and SD are meeting with Children1st on the development of the Case Management Support Service as SS has been included as part of the pilot phase. There continues to be ongoing work around the structure and governance of the service.

A framework of CPD and guidance around specific documents are being produced which look to be really useful.

Having discussions with Harper Macleod around the case management element and the sharing of information and there may be a change with governance required to allow us to do this. We have checked with the Editorial Board and there is a clause which allows this to be done but are going to meet with Harper Macleod to ensure this meets requirements.

CM asked around the timescale for rolling this out to all SGBs. SD believes looking to roll out to all of the SGBs over the next year and they are recruiting a new project officer to assist with that. BC acknowledged the level of frustration in relation to pace but reassured that the delay is as a result of making sure the system is robust and the theory works well when it goes live. The hope is that the new member of staff will accelerate the roll out in due course.

SD then provided an update and acknowledged that the uploading of old cases to Globocol has not been happening as quickly as had been hoped. One case is taking approximately 1.5 hours to upload, and this is taking much longer than expected. It is however important to note that all cases are closed though, so the risk of any repercussions of this delay is very low, plus the information is already held within the system.

SD summarised the current position on various other wellbeing and protection matters (including low level concerns policy, the recommendations from the Swim England review and the health-check).

SD noted that there has been no CWS training recorded for Board members, so this needs to be addressed and either training carried out or simply ensure that the training is recorded when it has been done. As part of the investment process it is expected that board members will keep their training up to date.

SD opened to the Board for questions. FC queried what was meant by the strategy objective around events and asked what the objective would be in that regard. SD noted that this was feedback from Children's 1st that we do not specifically say anything around safeguarding at events, but there perhaps needs to be a little more about how we shape the safeguarding at events.

7.1 Whyte Review Recommendations

SD spoke to this paper and explained that the 64-point Excel sheet which was shared at the last Board meeting has been broken up into a smaller document. 3 priorities have been highlighted in each area. Meeting as an internal staff group to allocate responsibility to each of the areas.

SD is looking for feedback on the structure and whether this is a better format and welcomes any feedback on how to present this in an effective way. It was agreed that the colour coding approach works well and this 'traffic light' structure is really useful. It was agreed that GS would review this in advance of the next Board meeting and work with SD to ensure that this is working as well as it can.

GS/
SD

SD reassured the Board that a lot of work has gone into this, but it is undoubtable that there is still a lot to do too.

Event passes are being well received by the majority of the districts and looking to have these rolled out quite quickly.

The Chair opened to the Board for questions and noted that he is pleased to hear the detail around athlete voices and the steps which are being taken to hear the thoughts and concerns from athletes. The Chair also raised some concerns about workload and noted that there may be a desire from temporary labour for a period of a few months to ensure that timescales are met. SD's name is across a large number of these and the Chair just highlighted that there is a need to redistribute some of the tasks.

The Chair also encouraged SD to look again at the traffic light system and ensure that they accurately reflect the current position of the objective. This will be clarified in the presentation which will be forthcoming.

8. Items for Decision

8.1 **sportscotland Annual Targets**

8.1.1 **Draft 2024-25 Annual Targets**

The Chair had nothing to add to the paper and EL noted that there are other targets outside of those in the paper arising out of the corporate plan, but these are the draft investment targets which **sportscotland** oblige us to track these as a condition of receiving public funds.

EL spoke through the various columns and explained what each of these show and highlighted that these objectives are publicly available on the **sportscotland** website.

BC noted that these targets will be reviewed at the end of March by the investment panel.
The board were happy with the proposed targets

8.2 **Scottish Swimming Name Change (presentation)**

HP presented the paper and presented to the Board the different considerations if proposing a name change. This is intended to be simply food for thought at this stage and there will be a full paper brought to the next Board meeting if there is a desire to progress.

HP

HP spoke through the various areas which need to be considered i.e. – what does the organisation stand for – performance lead v active communities. When testing the name change with design agency, there were views shared that the use of 'aquatics' resulted in a view that this was more elite/performance focused than swimming.

HP also sought thoughts on rebranding (i.e. new colours/logos) v renaming (keeping all of the branding, just changing the name on this) and highlighted the considerations and costs to be considered in relation to each.

If there is a desire to move forward the proposal would be to test the language and what the connotations are around the use of 'Aquatics' and get full costings for large format branding and the website.

EM noted that regardless of the approach taken, there would be a need to go through a full AGM. The Chair took this into account but noted that the decision should not be swayed by the governance consideration.

FC queried whether there was any appetite within the sports for a change in this regard and suggested that there could be a benefit in seeking thoughts of other disciplines before going too far down the process. There was also a discussion about the stage of the process that the other home nations were at.

It was agreed that the decision should not be made purely on consistency grounds, but rather to be guided by the stakeholders and their feelings on it. It was agreed that the YVP should also be consulted on this too.

The board agreed that the appetite of both the Council and Sport Chairs towards a name change should be tested before progressing any further with a paper to come to the next board.

HP

8.3 **Board & ARC Content Planning**

8.3.1 **Board & ARC Content Plan**

EL thanked EM and DM for their work on the paper but noted that there will be an additional meeting to the calendar to look at finance alone given the work that still needs to go into this.

DM noted that it was simply not possible to get the finance elements in a final form for January given the festive break and additional annual leave. This makes it difficult to give a meaningful update of the position. The projections created at the start of the year showed a deficit position of £82,000 by year end. However DM is still working on the accounts, and there may actually be a small surplus position by the end of the year. That being the case, it is very difficult to anticipate what year end will look like as there are still too many variables as there remain a lot of transactions in the last quarter. **sportscotland** are also looking for updates, but it will simply not be possible to have these figures ready for then. BC noted that this was because of the lead into the investment panels meetings in March.

BC suggested some possible solutions to assist with the timescales etc., in terms of moving cut off dates.

The Chair agreed that the Board should not be putting a busy SMT under additional pressure and is open to changing reporting dates if this will assist.

There was a discussion around rescheduling the 2 days get together which was meant to take place in January and suggested that this be rescheduled to the May meeting, moving this to the 11 – 12 May if possible. It was also suggested that the November meeting moved to an in person meeting to avoid too many virtual meetings taking place this year. EM to investigate.

EM

8.4 Risk Register Strand 1

DM spoke to the paper and explained that this is the list which the Board worked on at the away day last year. Felt that this needed to be updated and went through this in detail.

Taking each risk in turn, DM explained the proposed amendments to each and sought agreement from the Board. Agreed to remove the Scottish Independence Risk. AD suggested that the reference to 'global war' should be substituted to 'armed conflict'.

On the economic risks (risk 9), discussed and agreed that 'over-zealous' should be replaced with 'arbitrary'.

The Board approved the proposed amendments after discussions to ensure that other risks would be identified within the Strand 2 paper. The SMT will be reviewed in 6 months' time and updated with Strand 1 risks being reviewed by Board on an annual basis.

DM

8.5 Digital Awards Project Update

HP spoke to the paper and provided an update, given the value of this project there is a desire to get Board input on this. Generally pleased with the research and how it was conducted and reported back with good ideas for the solution going forward. There was a hurdle with the CRM systems used by providers, made it very difficult to connect this up, who did not want to share data with the organisation. This has resulted in a pause whilst coming up with a solution in this regard.

9. Management Report

9.1 Aquatics Plan Update

9.1.1 Aquatics Plan Priorities & Key Projects

EL spoke to the paper and sought input from Board on their desire to see this paper again in the future suggesting bi-annually. He acknowledged that it is an evolving piece of work which needs to be continuously reviewed.

The transition between Learn To Swim and Clubs is small and looking at ways this could be addressed, with a number of pilots taking place in this area. The Chair would like to see further information in relation to this. A paper will be brought to Board in the future in relation to this.

9.2 Management Accounts (Qtr 3) - To be presented to Board on the 20 March 2024

9.3 Risk Register (Top 10 Risks)

EL provided some details to the Board and explained that the purpose of this document was to make it a usable, living, working document which could be referred to regularly by team leads.

DM highlighted that the top 2/3 risks in each area and the top 10 generally are detailed. ARC have suggested that the risks are not numbered, leaving it up to the SMT/line managers to decide which should be brought to ARC and Board at any given meeting.

DM sought opinions on what the Board would like to see at each meeting and it was agreed that the approach of SMT bringing the key risks to Board as they see them.

FC noted that the preference would see more risks than less, from an oversight point of view and therefore would be wary of reducing what comes to Board regularly. DM noted that there was a significant difference in opinion in this regard. There is a spectrum of different perspectives on this and there is definitely a balance to be struck.

KW is concerned that this discussion has been ongoing for some time and wants to reach a decision now, rather the rolling it into any future meeting. DM wanted a note from the Board on what they want.

It was agreed that reviewing the full risk register each month was not a good use of Board time, however also do not want to get to the situation whereby no risks are brought to Board. The Board needs to see the most concerning risk, whether there was a number against this or not.

It was agreed that the SMT can decide the number of risks brought each month, but there must be some risks presented at each board meeting – it would not be suitable to say there was no risks to discuss in any given month.

9.3.1 Audit & Risk Committee

EL confirmed that an ARC meeting took place earlier that day, however it was agreed that there was nothing specific which needed to be discussed at Board. It was agreed that the minutes would be circulated before 20 March and if there are any questions or comments these can be dealt with on 20 March.

10. Management Team Report

It was decided that going forward, the SMT report should not be discussed at Board. Instead, the management should submit their report in advance and any questions can be raised via email. If there is anything that needs to be approved/discussed then this should be brought up as a separate paper. If a Board member sees something which is concerned about at a strategic level, then this can absolutely be brought up.

EM sought approval around Richard Collins from Open Water Committee being a co-opted committee member. This was passed.

11. British Swimming Update – verbal

The Chair provided an update and noted that he attended the European Short Course Championships in Bucharest and great performance from Scottish Swimmers. The Chair was reelected to the European Aquatic Bureau on Saturday. Liam Tancock is chair of athlete committee, Craig Hunter is Chair of Swimming Committee and Mel Beg will be Chair of High Diving and there have been other good nominations for other roles and will mean that British Swimming are well represented across a lot of the European Governance.

The European Aquatics rebrand is to happen on 22 March, and the British Swimming rebrand is to happen on 27 March. EL has been invited to this.

Following this, the British Swimming Championships will be taking place and the Chair is happy to arrange tickets for any board members who wish to attend.

12. AOCB

KW noted that there is a need to review appetite to risk and it was agreed that this should be done at the next Board meeting

AF raised that there have been discussions about financial crisis and inflation etc, and queried whether the two meets in the summer could be integrated. If an athlete was swimming in the Scottish National Championships, the British Championships and the British Age Groups means being away for over 1 month. AF wondered if there could be a financial burden reduced by looking at the structures/locations of these events.

13. Staff Salary Paper

The Chair asked all staff to leave the meeting to allow staff salary to be discussed. EL and DM remained on the call initially to answer any questions, as well as BC.

The Chair noted that this paper was for the annual review of staff salaries but noted the importance of ensuring that EL or DM do not influence the outcome.

JD sought clarification on one part of the paper around **sportscotland** additional support for additional staffing costs and what this meant. DM confirmed that **sportscotland** fund a number of posts and this amount has remained the same for a number of years and this has been recognised as a difficulty with the cost-of-living crisis. This was given on the understanding that it was ringfenced for the additional staffing costs to support these increases on an annual basis. This needs to be used only for the existing staff which are funded by **sportscotland**.

DB asked EL whether there was an increase in turnover of staff and if so, are there discussions at exit interviews as to why they were leaving – is this being impacted by pay levels. EL noted that there is an awareness that financial motivations may be a consideration in some cases. However there is no clear evidence that people are leaving for enhanced money, but there is difficulty during recruitment on this basis.

BC noted that the financial gap between Scottish Swimming and Active Schools staff as an example is closing considerably and there is no longer the same attraction to posts within Scottish Swimming based on remuneration. He also noted that in terms of package value, the organisation is significantly behind English counterparts.

On risk v affordability, DM commented that the priority should be to make sure that staff are being sufficiently rewarded and this should always be the starting point, with affordability being considered thereafter. If the budget initially shows

a deficit it will be up to the team to ensure a balanced budget with whatever figures are agreed.

With no further questions EL and DM left the call.

The Board approved the option to increase salary levels.

Date of Next Meeting(s):

Management Accounts (Qtr 3); 2024-25 Projections & Aquatics Sports & Investment Request – Wed 20 March
Council Meeting Sunday 18 February, 10.30am – 1:00pm, Stirling Court Hotel
Board Meeting Wednesday 8 May, on-line – start time TBC possibly 5:30

cc	Board & Council	Editorial Board	Harper Macleod
	Barry Cook, sport scotland	National Chairs	Kevin Reynard
